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Introduction

European Cooperation Abroad: European Diplomatic Cooperation Outside EU Borders

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Introduction

Bartolino di Codelupi is probably the first resident ambassador in the world about whom we know anything, especially that in 1375 he represented the Gonzaga of Mantua at the court of the Visconti in Milan.¹ Fast-forward a few centuries, and in 2010 the Council of the European Union (EU) adopted a decision establishing the European External Action Service (EEAS), composed also of ‘Union Delegations to third countries and international organisations’.² In this decision, EU member states established resident EU delegations, with a set of functions and characteristics that Codelupi would have easily recognized. One of these functions, however, would have surprised him. The Lisbon Treaty tasked diplomatic missions of EU member states and EU delegations in third countries and at international organizations with cooperating and contributing to the formulation and implementation of a common EU approach (Art. 32). In other terms, not only did EU delegations acquire new political tasks, but they were also put in the driving seat to coordinate European cooperation outside of EU borders with and between member states. The aim of this special issue of *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* is to explore the meaning and implications of this development.

Our focus will be on the practices of European cooperation in non-EU countries that emerged as a consequence of the Lisbon Treaty and of the 2010 decision establishing the EEAS, as well as their significance in relation to debates in diplomatic and European studies. With the benefit of a few years (although not centuries) of hindsight, it is time to focus on the implications of the Lisbon Treaty for the ways and doings of European diplomacy outside EU borders.

This special issue’s articles will address European cooperation abroad, defined as the interactions between EU member states’ diplomats and EU representatives outside the EU’s borders. While part of our attention will be on cooperation in general, with its implicit emphasis on foreign policy-making,³ we aim to focus particularly on European *diplomatic* cooperation — that is, the set of interactions pertaining to the diplomatic realm (with a focus on negotiation, information-gathering and

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¹ Garret Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1955), p. 61.

² Council Decision 2010/427/EU, Art. 1.4, OJEU L 201/30 (3 August 2010).

³ See, for instance, Robert Keohane’s definition: ‘[c]ooperation occurs when actors adjust their behaviour to the actual or anticipated preferences of others, through a process of policy coordination’; Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 51–52.

representation) and the role of the EU delegations therein. We explore how the creation of the EEAS and of the EU delegations in particular has affected interactions among European diplomats and EU representatives in non-EU countries and what kind of practices and challenges have emerged. In broad terms, we will explore three types of questions:

1. The first set relates to diplomacy more generally. How do innovations introduced by the Lisbon Treaty stand in the bigger picture of contemporary diplomacy? Are we, as Jozef Bátora asked well before Lisbon,⁴ witnessing the adaptation of the EU to the Westphalian order, or rather the reconfiguration of diplomacy because of European integration? Is this the last set of Codelupi's peers being appointed ('the re-invention of 19th century diplomacy'),⁵ or is there something qualitatively 'new' in European diplomacy post-Lisbon?⁶
2. What is the role and function of EU delegations in this context? Since 2009, EU delegations have taken up overnight diplomatic roles, with little strategic direction from headquarters on how to fulfil this new task. What difference have EU delegations made and what does this tell us about the role of the EEAS?
3. What is the added value of European cooperation abroad as conceived post-Lisbon? What do European representatives with diplomatic or quasi-diplomatic characteristics do that is specifically 'European' when they gather in third countries? In fact, what do they actually do? Is there a European integration process that occurs outside the EU borders, or does cooperation imply a rather loose form of coordination in terms of meeting at regular intervals with no consequences of substance? Do we see any indications that EU member states have changed their diplomatic network abroad in response to the Lisbon Treaty?

The key findings are based on the depth and the relevance of multilateral interactions under the leadership of EU delegations, as shown by the articles in this special issue. Based on long tradition as well as on the changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty, European cooperation abroad represents a new development in diplomatic practices. Rather than a new diplomatic system, this development represents — we as editors argue — a new 'site'⁷ in the landscape of diplomacy, which can be conducive to 'communities of practice'⁸ — that is, groups of practitioners bound together by a sense of purpose and a pattern of doings. Put differently, it is a step in the multilateralization of European countries' bilateral relations with countries outside the EU — how big a step is a matter that this special issue investigates.

In order to address these questions, this special issue embarks with two conceptual contributions, facilitating an interdisciplinary understanding of post-Lisbon European cooperation abroad from a legal and EU foreign-policy perspective. The first article, by Sanderijn Duquet, shows from a legal perspective that EU delegations fulfil most traditional diplomatic tasks, but that EU law constrains their diplomatic activities. The article by Michael Smith then situates EU diplomatic cooperation abroad in

⁴ Jozef Bátora, 'Does the European Union Transform the Institution of Diplomacy?', *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 12, no. 1 (2005), pp. 44–66.

⁵ Jan Wouters *et al.*, *The Organisation and Functioning of the European External Action Service: Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities* (2013), available online at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/457111/EXPO-AFET_ET%282013%29457111_EN.pdf (last accessed 28 April 2016).

⁶ Paul Sharp, 'Diplomats, Diplomacy, Diplomatic Studies and the Future of International Relations and International Studies', *International Studies Review*, vol. 13 (2011), p. 716.

⁷ Iver B. Neumann, *Diplomatic Sites: A Critical Enquiry* (London: Hurst, 2012).

⁸ Federica Bicchi, 'The EU as a Community of Practice: Foreign Policy Communications in the COREU Network', *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 18, no. 8 (2011), pp. 1115–1132; and Maren Hofius, 'Community at the Border or the Boundaries of Community? The Case of EU Field Diplomats', *Review of International Studies*, vol. 42, no. 5 (2016), pp. 939–967.

the hybridity of EU foreign policy.

The subsequent articles provide empirical flesh by analysing the daily diplomatic work conducted in different contexts. The focus is intentionally on European cooperation abroad in third countries that are considered politically salient: Washington DC and Moscow (Heidi Maurer and Kristi Raik); the Eastern neighbourhood (Dorina Baltag); Turkey as a particular case because of its association status (Özlem Terzi); and the Southern Neighbourhood (Federica Bicchi).

The audiences we address and the debates with which we engage belong to both diplomatic studies and European studies, with a particular emphasis on EU foreign policy. While most literature on European integration and EU foreign policy tends to focus on what happens in Brussels, one of the most interesting developments is, in our view, occurring outside EU borders. This collection adds a unique contribution to accounts of diplomacy by examining current developments on the ground as a consequence of changes introduced within the EU in 2010. Most importantly, we wish to bring different debates together and to knit them more tightly than often occurs, by building on the growing body of work on the ‘European diplomatic corps’⁹ and on the EEAS.¹⁰

The aim of this introduction is to put readers in the best possible position to appreciate the wealth of material presented in this special issue of *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, by clearing the ground and contextualizing the above-mentioned questions in current debates. Our introduction will start with a scene-setter, summarizing the developments in European diplomatic cooperation in third countries, both prior to and as a consequence of the Lisbon Treaty. We will then focus on debates in diplomatic studies and what European diplomatic cooperation shows about them. We continue with an overview of EU delegations, their composition and their role within the EEAS. Finally, we will focus on EU member states’ diplomatic networks and the type of contexts they provide.

European Cooperation Abroad Before and After the Lisbon Treaty

European diplomatic cooperation abroad is closely linked to the evolvement of European foreign policy. It started to acquire the pattern that still characterizes it with the creation of European Political Cooperation (EPC) in 1970.¹¹ The Lisbon Treaty in 2009 did not replace, but rather added to the model that had existed during previous decades.

After the Davignon Report (1970) the six founding members agreed to cooperate more closely on foreign policy in order to achieve stronger political unification. European cooperation in non-member countries was first officially mentioned in the second report on European Political Cooperation in 1973, hinting of an existing practice according to which ‘it proved useful to associate Embassies and

⁹ Michael Smith, Stephan Keukeleire, and Sophie Vanhoonacker (eds), *The Diplomatic System of the European Union: Evolution, Change and Challenges* (London: Routledge, 2016); David Spence, ‘Taking Stock: 50 Years of European Diplomacy’, *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 4, no. 3 (2009), pp. 235–259; and Frauke Austermann, *European Union Delegations in EU Foreign Policy: A Diplomatic Service of Different Speeds* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014).

¹⁰ Sophie Vanhoonacker and Karolina Pomorska, ‘The European External Action Service and Agenda-Setting in European Foreign Policy’, *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 20, no. 9 (2013), pp. 1316–1331; Jozef Bátora, ‘The “Mitrailleuse Effect”: The EEAS as an Interstitial Organization and the Dynamics of Innovation in Diplomacy’, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 51, no. 4 (2013), pp. 598–613; and Jozef Bátora and David Spence (eds), *The European External Action Service: European Diplomacy Post-Westphalia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

¹¹ Christopher Hill and William Wallace, ‘Diplomatic Trends in the European Community’, *International Affairs*, vol. 55, no. 1 (1979), pp. 47–66.

Permanent Representatives' offices' with the work of EPC.¹² The report specified that diplomats could send 'a common report' to the Political Committee including considerations for joint action, a document later to be called Heads of Mission (HoM's) report.¹³ Already by then, European cooperation was an 'appreciable phenomenon'¹⁴ that had 'evolved its extensive consultative structure'.¹⁵ Aspirations ran even higher. The London Report in 1981 specified that HoM's 'first instinct should be to coordinate with their colleagues of the [then] Ten'.¹⁶

Specific 'areas in which posts abroad were to seek to co-operate'¹⁷ were listed in 1984, at the instigation of the United Kingdom. The list, later attached to the Single European Act, ranged broadly and included administrative and practical problems, security and consular questions, health, education, information and cultural affairs. EU ambassadors were expected to meet at least once a month on political questions, and embassy staff in their own groups at regular intervals.¹⁸ Follow-up to agreed decisions was to be conducted through *démarches*, either collectively or by the Troika of Presidencies. A mechanism frequently employed was for the ambassadors to lunch together with the foreign minister of the host country, or to request special briefings for the (by then) Twelve.¹⁹ European cooperation was mentioned in very similar terms in all the subsequent treaties, from Maastricht to Lisbon, suggesting that European cooperation would be stepped up by ensuring implementation of common positions, while EU member states were to offer support to each other's citizens when no national diplomatic or consular network was in place.

Therefore, well before Lisbon and even at a time (the 1970s) when the European Communities stagnated internally, European cooperation abroad had become an established phenomenon, which accompanied and supported the development of EPC and Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), although its quality varied from place to place.

The participation of Commission delegations in European cooperation was a particularly sticky point, and national diplomats often had limited contact with European Commission officials abroad. This pre-Lisbon characterization was partly because Commission delegations were undergoing a painful process during the 1970s and 1980s, battling for role and status.²⁰ The network grew steadily, from five Commission offices abroad (in London, Paris, Geneva, Washington DC and Santiago) between 1958 and 1972²¹ to 'some 50 representations in third countries' by 1979.²² Since 1983, the Commission has given its Head of Delegations the courtesy title of 'Ambassador', but this 'might ventilate diplomatic sensitivities present in both member states and third countries'.²³ Establishment agreements granting

¹² *Second Report on European Political Cooperation in Foreign Policy Matters* (Copenhagen, 23 July 1973), Point 7, para 1, available online at https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1999/1/1/8b935ae1-0a38-42d4-a97e-088c63d54b6f/publishable_en.pdf.

¹³ See also Federica Bicchi, 'Information Exchanges, Diplomatic Networks and the Construction of European Knowledge in European Union Foreign Policy', *Cooperation and Conflict*, vol. 49, no. 2 (2014), pp. 239–259.

¹⁴ Simon Nuttall, *European Political Cooperation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 26.

¹⁵ Hill and Wallace, 'Diplomatic Trends in the European Community'.

¹⁶ *Report on European Political Cooperation issued by the Foreign Ministers of the Ten* (London Report) (London, 13 October 1981), Point 8, para 1.

¹⁷ Nuttall, *European Political Cooperation*, pp. 26–27.

¹⁸ See Yannick Gérard, 'La coopération politique européenne: *Methods* et *resultants*', *Revue du Marché Commun*, no. 309 (1987), pp. 466–470; and Christopher Hill and Karen E. Smith (eds), *European Foreign Policy: Key Documents* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 146.

¹⁹ Nuttall, *European Political Cooperation*, p. 27.

²⁰ European Commission, *The European Commission 1973–1986* (Brussels: European Commission, 2014), pp. 422–424.

²¹ European Commission, *The European Commission 1958–1972* (Brussels: European Commission, 2014), pp. 344–347.

²² Hill and Wallace, 'Diplomatic Trends in the European Community', p. 50.

²³ Jan Wouters and Sanderijn Duquet, 'The EU and International Diplomatic Law: New Horizons?', *The Hague Journal of*

diplomatic status to Commission delegates were negotiated state by state during the 1980s, and delegations finally obtained the right to fly a flag in 1985.²⁴ The Single European Act in 1986 specified that officials employed in the newly created EPC Secretariat 'shall be treated in the same way as members of [EU member states'] diplomatic missions',²⁵ thus foreshadowing immunity and privileges to which the EEAS will also lay claim.

Before the Lisbon Treaty, external representation of EU affairs was thus separated along the lines of competences, following the nature of the EU as a hybrid system in international affairs.

The Lisbon Treaty and Council Decision 2010/427/EU strengthened the role of the High Representative (HR), created the EEAS and upgraded EU delegations to become part of the EEAS. The Lisbon Treaty tasked the EU delegations with representing the Union, and not just the European Communities. EU delegations adopted the rotating presidency's tasks in representing the EU politically. Their role is to coordinate and support member states, and to represent the EU once there is a common position (adopted at the Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels, or by a jointly agreed *démarche*).

The role description of EU delegations, however, was left rather vague. EU member states' diplomatic missions and EU delegations 'shall contribute to formulating and implementing the common approach'²⁶ and 'cooperate in ensuring that decisions defining Union positions and actions adopted are [...] implemented'.²⁷ 'Union delegations in third countries [...] shall represent the Union' and 'shall act in close cooperation with Member States' diplomatic and consular missions'.²⁸ The Council decision furthermore emphasized that EU delegations are meant to 'share information with the diplomatic services of the Member States'.²⁹ The rotating presidency is still visible in areas where no exclusive EU competence exists.

The High Representative acknowledged in the 2013 *EEAS Review* that 'delegations in the field had to transform themselves overnight, taking on new roles with no extra resources and without consolidated instructions or advice'.³⁰ Therefore, many developments in European diplomatic cooperation occurred on the ground. The Lisbon Treaty and the Council decision establishing the EEAS did not provide a clear template for how European diplomatic cooperation abroad would work. Pragmatic bottom-up input from EU delegations and EU member states' embassies defined the 'new' form of cooperation without too much external interference. Articles in this special issue show various forms of cooperation that emerged in different places, but also significant convergence of practices.

The development of new forms of European diplomacy is thus a well-established, albeit at times contested, trend. This development needs to be read against broader trends in diplomacy, in order to understand the extent to which novelties on the ground are part of a broader picture, as opposed to representing a novelty therein.

Diplomacy, vol. 7, no. 1 (2012), p. 40.

²⁴ Véronique Dimmer and Mike McGeever, 'Diplomats Without a Flag: The Institutionalization of the Delegations of the Commission in African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 44, no. 3 (2006), p. 497.

²⁵ Single European Act, *Official Journal of the European Communities*, No. L169/7 (29 June 1987), Title III, Article 30, Point 11.

²⁶ Lisbon Treaty, Art. 32.

²⁷ Lisbon Treaty, Art. 35.

²⁸ Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), Art. 221.

²⁹ Council Decision 2010/427/EU, Art. 5(8).

³⁰ High Representative (2013), *EEAS Review* (July 2013), available online at http://eeas.europa.eu/library/publications/2013/3/2013_eeas_review_en.pdf.

Towards a European Diplomatic System? European Cooperation and Changing Diplomatic Practices

The expression ‘European diplomacy’ is often used, but two interpretations are possible in relation to the EU. The first simply suggests that national diplomats represent European countries and, in this sense, it is well established, if only because Europe is the place where diplomacy as we know it was first practised.³¹ The second interpretation goes beyond this narrow reading and addresses the possible existence of a European diplomatic system that is more than the sum of its parts. Undeniably, cooperation within the diplomatic corps (and thus between national diplomatic corps) has developed in Europe to an unprecedented extent across centuries.³² Whether there is a European diplomatic system, however, even if only an emerging one,³³ is more contested. Judged using the criteria set by Geoffrey Berridge for a full-fledged diplomatic system,³⁴ we are very close to having a European diplomatic system even in a traditional sense. Sceptics stress, however, that ‘EU collective diplomacy’ ‘remains substantively in the hands of the [currently] 28 member governments’³⁵ and cooperation tends to look more like a struggle for symbolic power.³⁶ In the quest to capture the essence of European diplomacy, several authors stress the hybridity of the European diplomatic system and the ambiguity of the EEAS as a diplomatic service,³⁷ or, more directly, to define it as a ‘proto-something’.³⁸ For our part, we focus on European diplomatic cooperation as a practice and explore what is ‘diplomatic’ about it and what is new in terms of ‘diplomatic-ness,’ namely as multilateral diplomacy in a bilateral setting and as a diplomatic ‘site’.

The various definitions of diplomacy help us to understand that European cooperation abroad is about diplomacy, but only in a broader definition of the term. Satow’s classic definition — ‘the conduct of business between states by peaceful means’³⁹ — would not do, as it emphasizes diplomacy as a tool of states. Indeed, modern diplomacy is often associated with the practice of inter-state relations and the set of structures, norms and rules regulating that practice. From a historical perspective, the birth of the modern state came along with an assertion of the political authority’s monopoly over the sending of ambassadors abroad.⁴⁰ The Lisbon Treaty itself highlighted how it does not impinge on states’ prerogatives and specifically on national representations in third countries or international

³¹ Matthew Smith Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy, 1450–1919* (London: Longman, 1993).

³² Mai’a Cross, *The European Diplomatic Corps: Diplomats and International Cooperation from Westphalia to Maastricht* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

³³ Bátora and Spence, *The European External Action Service*.

³⁴ These are ‘immunity of envoy, continuous contact, well-qualified if not necessarily professional personnel, bureaucratic direction, provision for mediation, a method for underpinning agreements, and flexibility of form and procedure’; see Geoffrey Berridge, ‘Amarna Diplomacy: A Full-Fledged Diplomatic System?’, in Raymond Cohen and Raymond Westbrook (eds), *Amarna Diplomacy: The Beginnings of International Relations* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

³⁵ Richard Whitman, ‘Europe’s Changing Place in the World and Challenges to European Diplomacy’, in Rosa Balfour, Catharina Carta and Kristi Raik (eds), *The European External Action Service and National Foreign Ministries: Convergence or Divergence?* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), p. 18.

³⁶ Rebecca Adler-Nissen, ‘Symbolic Power in European Diplomacy: The Struggle between National Foreign Services and the EU’s External Action Service’, *Review of International Studies*, vol. 40, no. 4 (2014), pp. 657–681.

³⁷ Bátora, ‘The ‘Mitrailleuse Effect’’, p. 609.

³⁸ Geoffrey Edwards, ‘The Public Face of a Proto-Something ...: Diplomacy and the European Union’, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2014), pp. 115–134.

³⁹ Ivor Roberts (ed.), *Satow’s Diplomatic Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 6th edition 2009).

⁴⁰ Smith Anderson, *The Rise of Modern Diplomacy*, pp. 4–5.

organizations.⁴¹

However, states have never been the sole actors in diplomacy. Historically, the practice of diplomacy preceded the establishment of modern states and, more recently, diplomacy can be seen as an integrating mechanism towards ‘a global polity’.⁴² Diplomats as state representatives remain significant, but their role has changed from ‘gatekeepers’ between the domestic and international to ‘boundary spanners [who are] indispensable in managing increasingly complex policy environments through the promotion of communication and trust’.⁴³ Therefore, it is more to the point to define diplomacy as ‘institutions and processes [and practices, we add] by which states and, increasingly others, represent themselves and their interests to one another in international and world societies’.⁴⁴ It is in this grey area of ‘others’ that European diplomatic cooperation — and this collection of articles — are situated.

Some definitions focus on diplomacy’s functions, rather than on its actors. From a legal perspective, the Vienna Convention regulates a number of functions.⁴⁵ In terms of politics, the ‘classic’ functions of diplomacy have been considered to inform, to represent and to negotiate, to follow Harold Nicolson.⁴⁶ European diplomatic cooperation in third countries certainly performs information-gathering, negotiation and, to an extent, representation, although the relative weight of the three components is different than when it is for national diplomatic services, as the contributions to this special issue show.

In this respect, and most importantly here, European cooperation abroad represents a step in the multilateralization of bilateral ties. The key diplomatic function that European cooperation abroad fulfils is ‘internal EU’ negotiation, and its format represents a clear innovation in diplomatic terms that is specific to the EU context. Negotiation is central to diplomacy, as in the classic definition according to which diplomacy is the ‘management of international relations by negotiation’.⁴⁷ Multilateralism has always been a hallmark of the EU. Multilateralism as a preliminary step in bilateral relations, however, is an aspect that has largely escaped analysis and represents a crucial innovation in the way diplomacy (and European diplomacy in particular) is conducted.

While the phenomenon is not new, the re-centring of multilateral negotiations around EU delegations — the main innovation in European cooperation abroad post-Lisbon — is the new development that we aim to highlight. In the complex pattern of national and EU foreign policies (de facto in the plural) towards a non-member country, national diplomats and EU delegations are entrusted with the creation of an ongoing dialogue aimed at resolving or smoothing differences prior to (or in parallel with) contacts with third parties. According to some commentators, there has always been a trend in diplomacy towards ‘networked diplomacy’, in which the connectivity and the capacity to orchestrate the network matter, rather than the available set of material resources. In parallel to ‘club diplomacy’, which relies on hierarchical structure, low transparency and is aimed predominantly at signing agreements, network diplomacy is about bridging the gap between home and the host country and getting to the negotiating table in the first place. This is a bigger phenomenon than public diplomacy, as network diplomacy is also tightly interconnected with the increase in IT means, which contribute to the networking activities.

⁴¹ See Declaration 14 in the Lisbon Treaty.

⁴² Iver B. Neumann, *At Home with the Diplomats: Inside a European Foreign Ministry* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), pp. 2 and 23.

⁴³ Brian Hocking, ‘Privatizing Diplomacy?’, *International Studies Perspectives*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2004), pp. 150–151.

⁴⁴ Sharp, ‘Diplomats, Diplomacy, Diplomatic Studies’, p. 717.

⁴⁵ Sanderijn Duquet, ‘Bound or Unbridled? A Legal Perspective on the Diplomatic Functions of European Union Delegations’, *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2018), pp. xx–xx of this issue.

⁴⁶ See Jeremy Black, *A History of Diplomacy* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), p. 14.

⁴⁷ Harold Nicolson, ‘Diplomacy Then and Now’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 40, no. 1 (1961), pp. 39–49.

Our contention here is that European cooperation abroad is not only part of the trend towards a more networked diplomacy, but is also an innovation on that trend because of the special links (as a ‘diplomatic site’) that emerge as a consequence of the intensity, regularity and leadership of its interactions. While EU member states’ diplomats are involved in network activities of various kinds, European cooperation in third countries is set apart by its thick calendar, as well as its institutionalized nature centred around EU delegations. Therefore, the difference with other forms of networked diplomacy is both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitatively, European cooperation can occur at a fast pace, as the articles in this issue demonstrate. Qualitatively, it takes place at a specific ‘site’, which is where diplomacy ‘can be captured analytically’.⁴⁸ The site is the building of the EU delegations, in which the overwhelming majority of meetings take place. The old, familiar negotiating table around which European diplomats have been sitting for decades has found a new, permanent location in the EU delegations across the globe.

Moreover, the type of relationship that occurs within the diplomatic group composed of European representatives (whether from the member states or EU) represents the best breeding ground for the development of communities of practice,⁴⁹ as a group of diplomats and quasi-diplomats with a shared understanding of their common endeavour and a common set of tools to achieve it. While European diplomats can also be said to represent an epistemic community,⁵⁰ the relatively small groups of European diplomats and representatives, with a very clear mutual understanding and a routine of meeting and discussing foreign policy, form more than a network and can develop a semi-automatic identification with a ‘group feeling’. In fact, rather than the existence of a relationship between representatives (the main hallmark of a network), the issue relates to the quality of that relationship. In a community centred on the practice of European cooperation in third countries, attachment to the group can come with the intensity of the agenda, as well as with purposeful leadership provided by the EU delegations. Therefore, European diplomatic cooperation stands out as a different type of diplomatic endeavour because it stands in a new diplomatic ‘site’ and can point in the direction of nurturing communities of practice and related *esprit de corps*.

In relation to diplomatic debates, therefore, an exploration of European diplomatic cooperation abroad has several benefits. It highlights the importance of more inclusive definitions of diplomacy, to account for actors beyond states. It stresses how the key functions of diplomacy can be performed. It also indicates how two ‘traditional’ forms of diplomacy — bilateral and multilateral — are merging and bringing multilateralism into bilateral relations. Finally, European diplomatic cooperation can also show how to go ‘beyond’ networked diplomacy to identify a new diplomatic ‘site’, as well as new forms of European ‘we-feeling’ developing outside Europe. Whether this represents a unidirectional development and the establishment of a single European diplomatic system, however, remains open to discussion.

EU Delegations and Member States

In 2017, the EEAS comprised 128 EU delegations representing the EU with third countries, plus eight EU delegations accredited to international organizations.⁵¹ The size of the EU diplomatic network is

⁴⁸ Neumann, *At Home with the Diplomats*, p. 3.

⁴⁹ Bicchi, ‘The EU as a Community of Practice’.

⁵⁰ Cross, *The European Diplomatic Corps*.

⁵¹ More specifically, there were 127 bilateral EU delegations and one mission accredited to Somalia with its head of

thus comparable to that of a mid-sized European country⁵² and testifies to a spectacular expansion. Starting from two delegations in Washington DC and Santiago de Chile in 1973, the network of European Commission delegations has overcome contestation,⁵³ although it has not led to the replacement of EU member states' national embassies. This section will look at the state of EU delegations, their role and their composition within the EEAS, especially in relation to the changing nature of European diplomacy.

As the role of the EU delegations within EU foreign policy-making had not been clearly defined, speculation emerged about possible developments. While some scholars interpreted early developments as integration via the back door, or 'centralization'⁵⁴ of EU foreign policy-making, EU policy-makers rejected the idea of EU delegations taking over from member states. Then European Council President Herman Van Rompuy clarified at the Annual Conference of EU Heads of Delegations in 2012: 'Your job on the ground — coordinating and guiding the positions of the [then] 27 — is vital to ensure that the EU continues to be fully part of the solutions to regional crisis and global challenges'.⁵⁵

It remains unlikely that EU delegations will replace the diplomatic efforts of EU member states, when one considers that EU delegations have hardly received additional staff since 2009–2010, despite the additional tasks for which they are now responsible. Some EU delegation staff were transferred to the EEAS, including heads of delegation, deputy heads, their support staff, political sections, and information, public diplomacy and administration staff.⁵⁶ In 2015, the EEAS employed 4,189 staff, of which 39 per cent were based in Brussels and 61 per cent in the EU delegations. Moreover, 1,107 were local staff members, 651 were assistant and secretary levels, 357 were contract agents, and 158 were trainees or junior professionals in EU delegations. These groups are complemented by 882 external staff, consisting of seconded national experts, service providers and interim staff. Only 934 EEAS staff members are on the administrator or diplomatic level (AD level), of which 307 represent member-state diplomats.⁵⁷ Most EU delegations still only have one EEAS AD post⁵⁸ — usually the ambassador.⁵⁹ 43 per cent of EEAS officials in EU delegations are national diplomats, who bring an essential contribution to the strengthening of the EU delegations' political work.

Next to the 2,261 EEAS staff working in EU delegations, there are 3,541 European Commission staff members posted to the EU delegations.⁶⁰ Therefore, the majority of staff in EU delegations are still reflecting the continued prominent role of the Commission, especially in external assistance management. This was also highlighted by former HR/VP Catherine Ashton appearing in the United Kingdom's House of Lords European Union Committee: 'Remember that in most delegations the staff

delegation temporarily residing in Nairobi. In addition, there are four 'special' EU offices in Taipei, Hong Kong, Jerusalem and Pristina. Source: data from the EEAS, first semester 2017.

⁵² See Staffan Hemra, Thomas Raines and Richard Whitman, *A Diplomatic Entrepreneur: Making the Most of the European External Action Service*, Chatham House Report (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2011), p. 4, available online at https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/public/Research/Europe/r1211_eas.pdf.

⁵³ European Commission, *The European Commission, 1973–1986*, pp. 422–424.

⁵⁴ Austermann, *European Union Delegations in EU Foreign Policy*.

⁵⁵ H. Van Rompuy, *Speech to the Annual Conference of the EU Heads of Delegation, 2012*, available online at http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-12-364_en.htm (accessed 26 April 2016).

⁵⁶ Council Decision 2010/427/EU, Art. 1.4, OJEU L 201/30 (3 August 2010), p. 40.

⁵⁷ European External Action Service, *EEAS Human Resources Report 2015* (May 2016), available online at http://eeas.europa.eu/background/docs/eeas_hr_report_2015.pdf.

⁵⁸ AD refers to the job category of 'administrator' for EU officials, compared to assistants (AST) and Secretaries/clerks (AST/SC).

⁵⁹ European External Action Service, *Annual Activity Report 2011*, p. 39, available online at http://www.eeas.europa.eu/background/docs/20121017_eas_aar_2011_en.pdf.

⁶⁰ *EEAS Human Resources Report 2015*, p. 5.

who are E[EU]AS may be only one. The rest are Commission development people doing fantastic work, but they are not mine'.⁶¹

At first, the decision to merge European Commission and EEAS staff led to controversy, as officials continued to receive instructions from both the Commission and EEAS respectively. This institutional stumbling block has been addressed by the double-hatted position of the EU ambassador, who is responsible for coordinating different aspects of EU policy-making, and by an inter-institutional agreement aimed at ensuring smooth and effective cooperation among all EU actors involved.⁶²

A key issue, however, remains the relations between EU delegations and EU member states' representations. In some quarters, the expectation was that member states would cut their embassy networks. The EEAS came into being as the effects of the economic crisis, unleashed in 2008, were becoming clear across the entire policy spectrum, foreign policy included. There was therefore a widespread assumption that not only was European foreign policy less relevant because of the economic crisis, but also that the EEAS was a way to delegate costly jobs.

However, the empirical evidence shows more complexity. While EU member states have been cutting the budgets of their ministries of foreign affairs (MFAs), this has not necessarily led to a reduction of their diplomatic networks. Small and new EU member states, in particular, have increased numbers of their diplomatic representations. The setting within which European cooperation abroad occurs is therefore often crowded. Division of labour cannot be taken for granted and the EU delegations are not the only reference point, as several articles in this special issue exemplify.

As Table 1 below shows, the overall number of member states' diplomatic representations outside the EU increased during the last decade, although the overall number of host countries remained unchanged at 166. The accession of Croatia in 2014 on the one hand increased the overall number of representations (as Croatia added its missions to the total). On the other hand it decreased the number of European representations outside the EU for 'older' member states, as they had a diplomatic mission in Zagreb at the time, which does not count as "outside the EU" embassy anymore after the accession of Croatia. It clearly shows that the creation of the EEAS has not led to a decrease in the number of national European diplomatic representations outside the EU. On the contrary, despite the economic crisis and the creation of the EEAS, EU member states have continued to invest in expanding their diplomatic networks.

TABLE 1: *Overall Number of European Representations Outside the EU*⁶³

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⁶¹ See online at <http://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/eu-select/transcripts/ceus20110614ev1.pdf>; see also *EEAS Review* (2013), p. 11. One early report, however, suggested 'a war of attrition being waged in the EU embassies abroad between heads of delegation or ambassadors and their staff who refuse to follow orders or speak to one another'; Ivan Travnor, 'EU Foreign Ministers Round on Lady Ashton', *The Guardian* (23 May 2011), available online at <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/23/eu-foreign-ministers-attack-ashton> (quoted in fn. 42 of Edwards, 'The Public Face of a Proto-Something ...', p. 139).

⁶² European Commission/High Representative, Joint Decision of the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 28 March 2012 on Cooperation Mechanisms concerning the Management of Delegations of the European Union, JOIN (2012) 8 final.

⁶³ This database has been created on the basis of the list compiled by the Council Secretariat and then by the EEAS, which is in turn based on information provided by EU member states about national diplomatic posts with a resident accredited representation in third countries.

The reasons for these concurrent processes are explored in the (limited) existing literature.⁶⁴ This picture suggests that rather than happening among a decreasing number of people, European cooperation abroad occurs in a crowded landscape, as the following articles will also illustrate. The selected cases in this special issue of *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* represent a particular set of European cooperation abroad on purpose: in all the chosen cases, we assume high political stakes, especially when compared to countries with a focus on external assistance and development cooperation. The Lisbon Treaty particularly impacted the political dimension of European diplomatic cooperation abroad, and we therefore want to pay attention to those cases where this dimension is most visible. This also correlates with staff numbers⁶⁵ for the selected locations: in all our cases, the number of EEAS staff is higher than the average in EU delegations (see Table 2 below).

TABLE 2: *Empirical Case Studies of this Special Issue*

Region		Staff		
		Commission	EEAS	Total
Americas	United States	31	59	90
Europe and Central Asia	Russia	34	37	71
	Belarus	17	10	27
	Moldova	26	11	37
	Ukraine	74	28	102
	Turkey	119	24	143
Middle East and North Africa	Algeria	31	15	46
	Egypt	68	22	90
	Israel	17	15	32
	Jordan	41	17	58
	Lebanon	37	15	52
	Libya	7	12	19
	Morocco	52	21	73
	Syria	17	6	23
	West Bank and Gaza Strip	60	19	79
	Tunisia	40	19	59
Average of all EU Delegations		14.2	4.5	17.9
Mode of all EU Delegations		18	11	14
Median of all EU Delegations		24	12	36

⁶⁴ For example, Balfour *et al.*, *The European External Action Service and National Foreign Ministries*; Steven Collet, 'Modernizing the Dutch Diplomatic Service: A Work in Progress', *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*, vol. 10, no. 4 (2015), pp. 440–451; and Brian Hocking and David Spence (eds), *Foreign Ministries in the European Union: Integrating Diplomats* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

⁶⁵ Staff numbers as provided to the authors by the EEAS, March 2016.

Conclusions

This special issue of *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy* explores the meaning of the EU's 2010 decision to include a dense network of EU delegations in the EEAS, with a view to contributing to debates on diplomatic and European studies. This introduction has set the scene by contextualizing current trends in European diplomatic cooperation abroad. After establishing the context of European diplomatic cooperation as it has evolved since the 1970s, it related to current debates in diplomatic studies about the changing nature of diplomacy, and it provided a comprehensive overview of the nature of EU delegations and related diplomatic trends. These themes are explored at length in the following articles, which highlight a set of broad findings:

1. EU delegations nowadays fulfil most diplomatic functions (representation, promotion of friendly relations, observing and reporting, and negotiating).⁶⁶ At the same time, EU delegations are constrained by the division of competences in EU law, particularly in areas of shared or supporting competences, in which there is room for politically shaping the extent of European cooperation abroad. The lack of clear indications in the Lisbon Treaty and the Council decision establishing the EEAS have led to grey areas that have often been tackled in a bottom-up manner, with EU delegations engaging in dialogue with member states whenever cooperation would provide added value. Most importantly, European cooperation abroad goes beyond traditional diplomatic functions in the key role that EU delegations play in coordinating EU presence on the ground.

2. Innovations introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in strengthening European cooperation abroad present a mixed picture with regard to contemporary diplomatic trends. Post-Lisbon, EU delegations reinforce (and, arguably, transcend) a form of networked diplomacy, also in political areas, and support the view of at least partial multilateralization of EU member states' bilateral relations with non-member countries. Network diplomacy had existed to a more limited degree in areas of EU exclusive and shared competences beforehand, but network diplomacy has now become the norm for almost all areas of European cooperation abroad — and this norm puts EU delegations at centre stage. Moreover, the quantity and quality of interactions among European diplomats and officials abroad suggest that European diplomacy is transcending networked diplomacy to establish a new diplomatic 'site' and at times a new sense of community too. While the practice might thus be updated yet not new, the articles show that European cooperation abroad is a new site of diplomatic practices, in which multilateralism tempers and moulds bilateral relations, although not to the extent that it fundamentally alters bilateral relations when foreign economic policy is not at stake. As a caveat, however, we must not forget — as Michael Smith's article shows — that EU external action remains essentially a hybrid construct, driven by economic diplomacy and relying on EU exclusive competence in this field. Moreover, the manner and degree of importance of this new site of diplomatic practices depends on the agreement of national diplomats on the ground, as well as on the reaction and willingness of the host country's government to engage in a different type of relationship.

3. Despite the 2008 global financial crisis and fiscal pressure on foreign ministries, there has been no clear-cut trend towards closing national embassies with the intention of shifting tasks and work to EU delegations. Therefore, and following up from the previous point, the key analytical issue here is in what manner, if any, the contribution of the EU delegations leads to a form of European cooperation abroad

⁶⁶ Duquet, 'Bound or Unbridled?'.

that is more than just the sum of its parts. Evidence from different contexts outside the EU, both in the literature and in the articles presented here, suggests that there is increasingly a multilateral subsystem of coordination and communication, which provides synergies and adds value to the activities of different actors in the system. EU delegations fulfil a special role as hubs in the network of European cooperation abroad. This is particularly the case in those locations where politics matters (which in diplomatic terms is often measured in terms of manpower) and it is here that we will be able to observe the potential added value of European diplomatic cooperation abroad.

However, the meaning of cooperation on the ground in the context of European diplomatic interaction among EU actors must be carefully defined. First, it does not imply that EU delegations interacting with EU member states' embassies are taking key EU foreign-policy decisions instead of the EU foreign-policy machinery in Brussels. Most embassies do not have this kind of policy power, although their feedback and input to the capitals might considerably shape national foreign-policy decisions. Moreover, cooperation abroad also does not necessarily imply common action (for example, in implementing a foreign-policy decision coming from Brussels), but refers to a situation where EU delegations and EU member states have the opportunity to fine-tune their own position in accordance with the general agreement, when this is possible, or at least in reaction to each other's positions. What we therefore witness — as reflected across the collection of articles presented here — is the palpable existence of strong coordination links between all European actors on the ground, as European cooperation has developed into a diplomatic site. This draws its strength from the circulation of information, which is particularly valuable for some, from the existence of a well-established mechanism for meetings and discussion, and from an element of (partly self-interested) trust that follows from the two. Even with Brexit looming on the EU's horizon, this coordination mechanism is likely to withstand developments on the European continent and provide a solid platform for further cooperation.